

Message Text

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14
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FM AMEMBASSY LISBON
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INFO USIA WASHDC
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AMCONSUL OPORTO
AMEMBASSY PARIS
AMCONSUL PONTA DELGADA
USMISSION NATO
DIA WASHDC
USCINCEUR VAIHINGEN GER

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USIA FOR IEU/MCLAUGHLIN

E.O. 11652: N/A
TAGS: SOPN, PINT, PO
SUBJ: MEDIA REFORM: FURTHER GOVERNMENT MOVES TO CHECK COMMUNIST
INROADS

SUMMARY: THE GOVERNMENT IS MOVING TO CURB COMMUNIST INROADS
IN THE MEDIA WHILE PLACING THE STATE-FINANCED SECTOR ON A
SOUNDER FINANCIAL FOOTING. THROUGH A SERIES OF TOUGH-MINDED
MEASURES BY COMMUNICATIONS STATE SECRETARY MANUEL ALEGRE, THE
GOVERNMENT HAS DEMONSTRATED ITS DETERMINATION TO PROCEED IN THE
FACE OF STIFF OPPOSITION. END SUMMARY

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1. CURBING COMMUNISTS AND CUTTING COSTS: THE SOARES GOVERNMENT

FACED THE SAME TWO-SIDED ISSUE THAT PLAGUED THE AZEVEDO GOVERNMENT IN THE MEDIA FIELD. THE STATE-OWNED OR FINANCED MEDIA WERE SERIOUS DRAINS ON THE TREASURY AND THEIR STAFFS WERE RIDDLED WITH COMMUNISTS. THE EIGHT NEWSPAPERS DEPENDENT UPON SUBSIDIES TO KEEP AFLOAT WERE COSTING PORTUGUESE TAXPAYERS TWO MILLION DOLLARS MONTHLY. REBOUNDED FROM POST NOV-1975 REVERSES, COMMUNISTS IN THE MEDIA WOODWORK WERE BECOMING BOLDER. IN MEASURES SPECIFICALLY AIMED AT THE COMMUNISTS, THE SOARES GOVERNMENT HAS:

-- ANNOUNCED A TOTAL RESTRUCTURING OF THE OFFICIAL NEWS AGENCY, ANOP.

-- NAMED THE TOUGH-MINDED FORMER LABOR MINISTER TOMAS ROSA TO HEAD THE STATE TELEVISION NETWORK (RTP). ROSA, WITH TYPICAL DECISIVENESS, HAS:

(A) CREATED AN ADMINISTRATIVE COMMITTEE TO OVERSEE RTP NEWS SERVICE;

(B) SACKED THE FAR LEFT DIRECTOR OF CURRENT EVENTS PROGRAMMING;

(C) ACCEPTED THE RESIGNATION OF THE INEFFECTIVE RTP NEWS DIRECTOR.

-- RESHUFFLED THE STAFF AT THE STATE RADIO NETWORK (RDP).

RDP PRESIDENT, MAJ. JOAO FIGUEIREDO, A CLOSE FRIEND OF PRESIDENT EANES, HAS GIVEN RDP NEWS DIRECTOR JOSE CABRAL VIEGAS, HIS HEAD WITH AN OPEN MANDATE TO SET THINGS STRAIGHT. WE UNDERSTAND THAT SOME 40 RDP COMMUNIST-SYMPATHIZING EMPLOYEES MAY BE FIRED AS A RESULT OF ONGOING INVESTIGATIONS INTO RDP INVOLVEMENT IN THE NOV 1975 COUP ATTEMPT.

-- CLOSED DOWN DEFICIT-RIDDEN "JORNAL DE COMERCIO," ONCE A RESPECTED BUSINESS PAPER, BUT IN RECENT MONTHS INCREASINGLY A COMMUNIST PROPAGANDA SHEET.

TO CUT COSTS THE GOP HAS:

-- RAISED THE PRICE OF STATE-FINANCED DAILY NEWSPAPERS 50 PERCENT AND WEEKLY NEWSPAPERS 25 PERCENT. ALL OTHERS EXCEPT THE COMMUNIST PRESS HAVE FOLLOWED SUIT.

-- RESISTED PRESSURES TO FUND UNECONOMICAL PUBLICATIONS. THE GOVERNMENT REFUSED TO BAIL OUT PRO-COMMUNIST WEEKLY MAGAZINE "FLAMA" WHICH HAD RUN UP A LARGE DEBT.

2. PROMOTING DIVERSITY: IN A FURTHER EFFORT TO REDUCE PCP LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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INFLUENCE BY INCREASING MEDIA DIVERSITY, THE GOVERNMENT HAS:

-- ANNOUNCED IT WOULD COVER POSTAL COSTS FOR MAILING PERIODICALS THROUGH THE END OF 1976. ONE OF THE PRINCIPAL EFFECTS WILL BE TO PRESERVE A REGIONAL PRESS WHICH HAS BEEN CHARACTERIZED BY ITS STRONG ANTI-COMMUNIST SENTIMENTS.

-- SUPPORTED THE APPLICATION OF CONSERVATIVE DAILY "O DIA" FOR CREDIT FROM STATE BANKS. ALTHOUGH "O DIA" IS FREQUENTLY CRITICAL OF THE GOVERNMENT, THE PAPER IS EVEN MORE CRITICAL

OF THE PCP AND ITS FRIENDS.

3. COMMUNIST RESPONSE: THE COMMUNISTS HAVE RESPONDED PREDICTABLY. WHILE THE PCP HAS ANGRILY CHARGED THE GOVERNMENT WITH ATTEMPTING TO OBLITERATE PRESS FREEDOM AND PROMOTING "CAPITALIST RECUPERATION," THE COMMUNISTS IN THE MEDIA ARE KEEPING THEIR HEADS DOWN. THE PCP-CONTROLLED JOURNALISTS UNION AND ANCILLARY ORGANIZATIONS OF SELF-STYLED INTELLECTUALS AND WRITERS ARE CARRYING THE BALL FOR THE PCP.

4. GOP SHOWS DETERMINATION: THE STEADY DRUMBEAT OF PCP COMPLAINTS APPEARS ONLY TO HAVE STIFFENED GOVERNMENT RESOLVE TO STAY THE COURSE. PRESSURES FROM NEWSSTAND DEALERS TO FORCE THE GOP TO GIVE THEM A SLICE OF THE INCREASE IN NEWSPAPER PRICES WERE RESISTED. COMMUNICATION SECRETARY ALEGRE'S RESPONSE: "THE GOVERNMENT WILL NOT GIVE UP; DOES NOT GIVE UP; AND CANNOT GIVE UP." HE THREATENED TO CREATE A NEW DISTRIBUTION AGENCY IF NECESSARY TO SELL THE PAPERS ON GOP TERMS. FACED WITH SUCH RESOLVE, THE DEALERS GAVE IN.

5. FURTHER STEPS PLANNED: MANUEL ALEGRE AND HIS DEPUTY, JOAO SOARES LOURO, HAVE TOLD EMBOFFS THAT THE GOP IS INTENT UPON ENDING THE OPERATING DEFICITS OF THE STATE-FINANCED PRESS. THE GOP ACCEPTS THAT A NUMBER OF NEWSPAPERS WILL FOLD AS A RESULT. MANY JOURNALISTS WILL HAVE TO BE RE-TRAINED AND CHANNLED INTO OTHER WORK. SURPLUS PRESSES AND OTHER EQUIPMENT WILL BE USED TO BEEF-UP MEAGER FACILITIES IN THE AZORES AND OUTLYING AREAS IN CONTINENTAL PORTUGAL WHERE THERE IS AN UNMET DEMAND FOR REGIONALLY-OREINTED DAILY NEWSPAPERS. FACED WITH MANY DEFICIT-RIDDEN ENTERPRISES, THE GOP WILL SEEK OPERATING EFFICIENCIES THROUGH THE CREATION OF THREE STATE FIRMS: ONE TO EDIT PUBLICATIONS, ANOTHER LIMITED OFFICIAL USE

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TO PRINT THEM, AND A THIRD TO DISTRIBUTE THEM. TARGET DATE FOR ACCOMPLISHING THIS IS THE END OF JANUARY 1977. A LONGER-TERM GOAL IS TURNING STATE-OWNED PAPERS BACK TO PRIVATE ENTERPRISE.

6. COMMENT: AS IN THE EDUCATION, AGRARIAN, AND LABOR SECTORS, THE GOVERNMENT IN THE MEDIA FIELD IS BACKING UP ITS WORDS WITH CONCRETE ACTIONS. THE GOVERNMENT HAS SET FOR ITSELF A DIFFICULT TASK. BUT ITS ACTIONS REFLECT A DETERMINATION TO SEE THE JOB THROUGH.
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